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## REVIEWS

**Spanish in the High Schools. A Handbook of Methods,** with Special Reference to the Junior High School, by Lawrence A. Wilkins. Benj. H. Sanborn & Co., Boston, 1918. x + 265 pp.

One may well doubt whether any other first book dealing with the pedagogy of a given subject has been so uniformly worthy of praise as the one Mr. Wilkins has given us with the above title. Spanish teachers the country over, especially those in secondary schools, cannot but hail with delight the appearance of a volume so timely and withal so adequate to their needs.

In setting himself the task of writing a book on methods in Spanish instruction Mr. Wilkins was undertaking pioneer work, for, as he aptly remarks, "Of bibliography concerned especially with methods of teaching Spanish . . . none exists." But the author comes to his task particularly well fitted, since his extensive experience as a teacher and as Director of Modern Languages in the high schools of New York City has furnished him with unsurpassed opportunity for observation of the difficulties encountered in the teaching of Spanish and the methods employed in meeting them. A high school man himself he naturally addresses himself to high school problems, but his book has a far wider appeal, and we venture the assertion that few college teachers of Spanish will fail to derive profit and help from reading the many discussions and suggestions therein presented.

A detailed examination of the book chapter by chapter would alone do entire justice to the work, but obviously such treatment could not find place in the space at a reviewer's disposal. In the course of seventeen chapters covering some 264 pages Mr. Wilkins presents for our consideration such topics as these: Why Teach Spanish? The Present Progress of Spanish in the Schools, The Preparation of the Secondary Teacher of Spanish, The Aim in Teaching Spanish, The Method to be Used, The Course of Study in Spanish for the Junior High School and Methods of Teaching It, The Relation of This Course to That of the Four-Year High School and to That of the Senior High School, The Organization of Classes, The Recitation, Methods and Devices, Suggestions, Club Work, Handicaps to the Teaching of Spanish, Spanish as a Foundation for Latin.

In an introductory chapter the author marks out the basic plan of his discussion, explains the sub-title, With Special Reference to the Junior High School, and justifies the publication of a book devoted exclusively to methods of teaching Spanish. For the well informed no justification is necessary, but the experiences of the past few years have shown such lamentable misconception of the true importance of Spanish that what is said will not come amiss. Summing up the purposes of the book, the author asserts that it is his hope "to help shake off the apologetic rôle too long played by Spanish teachers, to take stock of those compelling reasons that lie at the basis of the claim for an equal place for Spanish, to define the aim of the teacher of that

language, to crystallize and express a few of the ideas Spanish teachers long have held but have seldom expressed in print, to suggest to the enthusiasm of the Spanish teacher (the specialist in that language is uniformly enthusiastic) modes of effectiveness, to encourage him in a field of endeavor where he has been able to find few rallying-points or few finger-boards pointing the way, [and] to give him practical help as well as encouragement."

Teachers of Spanish generally feel no need of justifying the teaching of that language, yet that there is need for stating the place that Spanish may justly claim is evidenced by the oft repeated inquiry, "What is the value of Spanish?" The passing of German in so many schools has for the first time brought many superintendents seriously to consider whether or not they should introduce Spanish into their schools, and their first impulse has been to inquire what claims to consideration it has. The writer has been called upon frequently to answer just such inquiries, and the fact that they continue to come justifies Mr. Wilkins in setting forth at length in Chapter II the many reasons why Spanish should be taught. In that chapter he marshals a splendid array of arguments dealing with the economic and commercial, the cultural, the educational and disciplinary, the political and social values accruing from a study and mastery of Spanish. No one, after reading the arguments here adduced, could attempt longer to deny to Spanish its just place in the curricula of our secondary educational institutions.

In the next chapter, summing up the present progress of Spanish, the author states definitely and unhesitatingly the difficulties that at present hinder the teaching of Spanish. Convinced that the study of languages should be begun with pupils of the age of those in the last two years of the present grade schools, and believing also that such study, "*under present conditions*, is mostly time wasted," he sees in the well-organized junior high school the solution of the problem. He urges the extension of that plan of school, and his arguments are thoroughly sound. Assuming that such a school is already in operation or looking forward to that as an ultimate goal, he outlines the work to be done in the three years of that school and shows how that work may be correlated with the work of the senior high school or with that of the present four-year high school.

In the first two years of the junior high school little grammar should be taught, and that should be taught informally, without the use of a text. The reading will be slight in amount, but there should be much effort directed toward securing an accurate pronunciation. There will be ample oral practice and dictation with drill on vocabulary and verbs by means of series units of facts and actions. In the third year a simple grammar text may be introduced, but the extension and development of the work begun in the other two years should be continued and emphasized. A notable feature of the work from this stage on would be "self-drill," the value of which the author rightly insists upon.

The work done in the junior high school would cover practically the first year and a half of that done in the present four-year high school and the student would, in general, find himself well prepared to take up the fourth term (semester) of that school. The articulation suggested is not perfect,

but is workable. Much more desirable, naturally, is it that the junior high school have its logical complement, the senior high school, in which a properly outlined course would furnish perfect articulation with the course in the lower school and thus furnish a complete course of six years in the secondary school period. A syllabus for the four-year high school is offered, showing how the articulation may be effected and providing valuable help in suggesting a proper course of study to teachers and superintendents planning to introduce Spanish.

Discussing the preparation that the secondary school teacher should have, Mr. Wilkins outlines a somewhat ideal program. His aims are high and doubtless many will adjudge them impossible, or nearly so, of realization. But to all such critics the author has the ready answer that some teachers have already accomplished all that he has outlined and that with improved conditions the road will be easier for others to do so. It is, perhaps, too much to expect that great numbers of our secondary teachers will be able to go on to the doctorate and have besides time and means for residence in a foreign country. Yet let us hope that many a reader of this ideal program may be inspired to hold that as his own ideal of preparation and the goal to which he strives. Both graduate work and foreign travel and residence are absolute essentials in the training of the successful teacher of modern foreign languages, and until preparation afforded by such work and travel becomes more general, we cannot expect that modern-language instruction in this country will attain the degree of excellence that our needs demand. Pertinent to the problem involved in these two questions are the author's remarks about the sabbatical year for high school teachers.

Mr. Wilkins so well expresses the aim that should obtain in the teaching of Spanish that it seems worth while to quote in full:

"The aim of the teacher of Spanish in the United States should be to effect that thorough mental discipline which is imparted by a study of grammar, idiom, and syntax; and so to develop that ready facility of ear, tongue, and eye that, all combined, will make the present and future use of the language, and progress therein, both possible and certain. We cannot in two or three years, nay even in six, assure a student a complete mastery of Spanish. But we can and should so have trained him that he may apply his knowledge of Spanish to any one end or several ends with the self-confidence (conscious or unconscious) that he can easily grow up to the demands that may be made upon his knowledge of that language."

After this statement of the aim there follows a discussion of the method to be used in teaching the language. Direct method, the storm-center of modern-language teaching in this country of late years, finds but limited support by the author, whose opinion is expressed in the following: "The teacher of modern foreign languages should use *as much as possible* the language which is the subject of study; he should use *as much as is necessary* the language of the pupil; but he should never forget that he must at all times be intelligible to all the pupils." That direct method is not entirely devoid of worth, he recognizes, for "An American teacher who cannot use the direct method . . . [is] hopeless." Intransigent advocates of this method will

likely be disappointed at this stand, yet they may take consolation in the fact that he sees some good in their hobby and would make provision for it by incorporating it in an "eclectic method," the best method for the teacher of Spanish, which would choose what is best in all the methods and, having so chosen, would adapt the material to the individual instructor's ability. Mr. Wilkins very rightly recognizes that an instructor should have a considerable amount of liberty in working out his own method, for a manner of teaching admirably successful with one type of instructor may easily be wholly the contrary with another.

Intimately associated in thought with this chapter are those dealing with "The Organization of Classes," "The Recitation," "Methods and Devices," and "A Miscellany of Suggestions." Particularly the last two are so rich in helpful suggestions for the teaching of Spanish that no teacher can afford to ignore them. There one will find a great variety of devices and methods for handling the reading text, the grammar exercises, dictation, oral practice, composition work, and memory work. It is safe to assert that in these chapters the teacher will find one of the most helpful features of the book. Indeed, we know of no other place where the inexperienced teacher can find so much that will be of direct, positive aid to him in his work, and no teacher, successful in adapting these suggestions to his own work, need ever fear that his class will go stale from lack of interest and variety.

Many teachers will find also the bibliography at the end of the book of especial help. It is about as complete as the case requires, though several items that the writer has found serviceable are missed. Under "Hispanic America" Brandon's *Latin American Universities and Special Schools* (Washington, U. S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin, 1912, No. 30) would prove of interest and some value to most teachers if only for the numerous excellent plates. Under "Journals for the Teacher of Spanish" it would seem that the *Modern Language Journal*, New York and Chicago, though not devoted exclusively to the interests of teachers of Spanish, might well find mention. Among the "Illustrated Albums" certainly P. Jousset's *L'Espagne et le Portugal Illustrés*, Paris, Larousse, should be included. The latest edition of the *Gramática . . . por la Real Academia Española* (p. 256) is 1917, not 1900. Typographical errors are practically absent, only six having been noted in the entire work.

To have written a book on "Methods," epochal in the history of Spanish instruction in the United States, and to have written it without a dull page from cover to cover, is no small feat. Yet this is exactly what Mr. Wilkins has done. He has written with an enthusiasm that pervades every page, yet he has written sanely and with a soundness of views and argument that is unhappily wanting in many similar treatises. He has placed all teachers of Spanish under a debt of gratitude to him. Most of them will find his book indispensable; not one can afford to ignore it.

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